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ABSTRACT

Combining the study of archetypal patterns and literature study with assignments based on archetypal schema engages students intellectually as they relate their personal experiences to texts outside of themselves. This approach is grounded in the theory that engagement in a topic, whether reading or writing, is essential for the learner to make meaning and provides archetypes as hooks to engage students in creating meaning from literature and then writing essays of literary criticism. Expanding upon the writings of Jung, archetypes are recognized as the basic patterns from which copies are made. A writing assignment guiding students in writing about the archetypes of initiation includes a definition of initiation and information on the role to be assumed by the writers, the audience, the format, and the topic. The student is to look at his or her life as text and select one initiation experience, which should then be described vividly. Such use of the archetype is one way of leading students into the realm of defining values, initiating them on to the path of wisdom. (JK)

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ARCHETYPES AND ASSIGNMENTS: WRITING ABOUT PERSONAL ARCHETYPES AIDS STUDENTS IN WRITING COMPOSITION PAPERS AND UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE

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Archetypes and Assignments: Writing About Personal Archetypes Aids Students in Writing Composition Papers and Understanding Literature

If we believe Miriam T. Chaplin's 1986 call to convention for the Conference on College Composition and Communication, then we as educators profess that "education occurs through perpetual intellectual movement along a developmental continuum." Sometimes our students begin at an extreme edge of the continuum, but our challenge as professors is to "lead out" (the Latin root of the word) the students as we engage them in a spirit of inquiry. One way to achieve this engagement is to combine the study of archetypal patterns with the reading of literature and structuring of assignments based on an archetypal schema. After explaining this approach, I will define archetypes, particularly the archetype of initiation, present a sample writing assignment, and share some student responses to that assignment.

In the northern Arizona, rural community college district where I teach, sometimes I despair of my students' engagement in the thinking process and the thinking skills of summary; I work initially to insure their mastery of the literal level of meaning in literature. Last semesters's revelation was that some who read this passage in Crane's "The Open Boat" were unsure what it meant: "In the shadows, face downward, lay the oiler. ...The land's welcome for it [still and dripping shape] could only be the different and sinister hospitality of the grave."[1] Did the oiler really die? ask the students. Our students are traditional, non-traditional, Native Americans, Spanish-speakers, and senior citizens of average ability to superior ability, yet they all struggle to understand how a sentence such as the one above could possibly relate to them.

While my students are reading "The Open Boat" by Crane, I discuss

archetypes and define initiation experiences. I ask them to ferret out initiation experiences in their lives and select one about which to write. This assignment is the first one in English 102, the second course in our composition sequence. Not only does this assignment allow me to diagnose students' weaknesses and their ability to focus on a thesis, but I also learn something about them without having them write autobiographical pieces. The initiation experience and the lesson(s) learned become the thesis focus of the paper, not the student's entire life.

To unify this course in composition and literature with the schema of archetypes has been successful because the schema allows students to relate their personal experiences to texts outside of themselves; the schema helps them to understand that their significant life experiences are the stuff of which literature is made. Eventually I attempt to stimulate divergent thinking as they respond more critically to literature.

This approach is grounded in the theory that engagement in a topic, whether reading or writing, is essential for the learner to make meaning. As Janet Emig says in "Writing as a Mode of Learning," "we are acquiring as well some empirical confirmation about the importance of engagement in, as well as self-selection of, a subject for the student learning to write and writing to learn."[2] When the student cares about an idea, the engagement in the topic is more complete; according to Polanyi, there is a "fusion of the personal and the objective as Personal Knowledge...into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known, and...this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his knowledge."[3]

From my observation, most students become passionately engaged in literature with the schema of archetypes. I can then move from this initial assignment to essays of literary criticism, such as character analyses, poetry explications, and thematic implications. Students see interrelationships, what Buckler means when she says: "Logically, then, one can conclude that creating a work of literature, reading it, and writing about it are simply different manifestations of the same vital human function--the mind's effort to create meaning from experience."[4]

Our students need a hook to engage them in creating meaning--or else they ignore the literature assignment and avoid class when we discuss "The Open Boat." Archetypes can be that hook. "Archetype" is defined in the broadest sense by Estella Lauter as "the tendency to form mental images in relation to repeated experiences."[5] She says that these "images give rise to rituals and stories if the experience is powerful enough, and these in turn become mythic if they are widely shared."[6]

Archetypes are basic patterns from which copies are made. According to Jung, an archetype is the following:

> a figure, whether it be daemon, man or process, that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative fantasty is fully manifested. If we subject these images to a closer investigation, we discover them to be the formulated resultants of countless experiences of our ancestors. They are, as it were, the psychic residue of numberless experiences of the same type.[7]

A corollary to the theory of archetypes is that "literary expression is an unconscious product of the collective experience of the entire human species."[8] The metaphors we choose to describe our experiences may differ,

but we all are initiated into new knowledge, experience death-rebirth, undertake various tasks, and have some explanation for our origin/ creation myth. Thus, when someone like Thoreau talks about going to Walden Pond in 1845 to "live deep and suck out all the marrow of life,"[9] we can assume he will sound the depths not only of the pond but also of his inner life.

When I say archetypal patterns, I do not attach solely male images to the patterns. Although Jung has been criticized by some for speaking of males, I would agree with Annis Pratt:

> On the one hand, my sister critics have urged me to avoid the Jungian-archetypal mode on the grounds that Jung has so grossly erred in his allocation of stereotyped characteristics to male and female that his concepts are totally invalid for our endeavor; on the other hand, I find that the insights of Jung, Frye, and Campbell, if turned upside down to admit of women as human participants in the quest for identity and rebirth experience, are helpful in the elucidation of the psycho-mythological development of the female hero.[10]

Given that both men and women undertake journeys, most will encounter numerous initiation experiences in their quests. I assign my students the task of selecting one initiation experience about which to write. I prepare them to write with the following assignment.

Role	Biographer of your life. You are in yout 80's and considering the significant events of your life span. Evaluate the lesson(s) you would transmit to your grandchildren regarding one initiation experience.
Audience	Peers, English Instructor.
Format	Multi-paragraph, Thesis-controlled essay(500-1000 words)
Topic	One selected initiation experience. Define, describe, and state knowledge you learned from the experience. Remember to use strong verbs and words that relate to sense experiences. Avoid abstractions without explaining them ("Life is reality.") So what? Show the reader your particular reality ("I was thrown to the ground by the entire football team, and they poured gatorade all over me.") This essay will be evaluated in terms of its content, organization, development, expression, and mechanics. (Assignment sheet attached)

In addition to providing a checklist for this paper, which details more specifically the above five criteria for grading (see attachment), I explain and define initiation carefully. I read Lionel Trilling's definition of initiation in literature:

> This usually takes the form of an initiation into life, that is, the depiction of an adolescent coming into maturity and adulthood with all the attendant problems and responsibilities that this process involves. An awakening, awareness, or an increased perception of the world and the people in it usually forms the climax of this archetypal situation (e.g., Holden Caulfield, Huckleberry Finn, Stephen Dedalus, Eugene Gant, The Awakening by Kate Chopin.[11]

Dictionary definitions include this idea of awakening to new knowledge; often a special ritual is required. Webster's New World Dictionary, 2nd College Edition (1980) defines initiation as "the ceremony by which a person is initiated into a fraternity." The American Heritage Dictionary, New College Edition (1979) indicates initiation is rudimentary exposure, instruction, or a "ceremony ritual, test or period of instruction with which a new member is admitted to an organization or office or to knowledge."

Most definitions include either the idea of a passage of a young person from ingnorance about the external world to vital knowledge or an important self-discovery and resulting adjustment to life or society. Jaffe and Scott, with reference to literature, indicate that "a character, in the course of the story, learns something that he did not know before, and...what he learns is already known to and shared by, the larger group of the world." Brooks and Warren see initiation as a discovery of evil. Leslie Fiedler emphasizes self-understanding: "An initiation is a fall through knowledge to maturity; behind it there persists the myth of the Garden of

Eden, the assumption that to know good and evil is to be done with the joy of innocence and to take on the burdens of work and child-bearing and death."

Usually an initiation story has a young protagonist experiencing a change of knowledge about the world or himself, or a change of character: "An initiation story may be said to show its young protagonist experiencing a significant change of knowledge about the world or himself, or a change of character, or of both, and this change must point or lead him towards an adult world. It may or may not contain some form of ritual, but it should give some evidence that the change is at least likely to have permanent effects."

If a character is brought to the threshold of maturity but does not change, the effect of the initiation experience is often shocking. Self-discovery may develop as a character is struggling for self-definition. A decisive initiation moves the protagonist firmly into maturity and understanding as a result of self-discovery.

For this writing assignment, the student is to look at his or her life as text and find one initiation experience. The student should describe it vividly with an effective lead. The lesson or knowledge acquired will probably be part of the thesis focus. The class engages in a workshop with the checklist and determines if the thesis focus is clearly stated and also critiques the other elements of the paper. A third attachment to this paper indicates a student's first effort to respond to this assignment; although her details and support are weak, she does state a central idea. Subsequent drafts could improve the paper, but the framework exists. This

particular student has since continued with an American literature course; before she wrote this paper she freely admitted that she disliked reading literature. Yet by the end of this course she wrote an acceptable critical analysis of the use of color images in Stephen Crane's "The Blue Hotel."

Another paper on an initiation experience, which is on the topic of a young boy's first experience with death, reveals more flair with the language. [Show overhead transparency of paper.] This student, a re-entry male, became engaged in reading literature and plans to take more courses, even though he is in a banking and finance program and no more literature is required. What better skills for life could we be giving our students than a way to relate passionately to the world around them? These affective areas are those behavioral objectives so hard to quantify, but what could be more important?

We have defined archetypes and initiation and explained the rationale for this approach. Bettina Knapp in A Jungian Approach to Literature says initiation is defined from the root:"to go within."[12] This pattern is part of an anthropological approach to myth and storytelling, manifestations which are centuries old. As Robert Johnson says, "a person who grasps the inner meaning of a myth is in touch with the universal spiritual questions life asks all of us."[13]

All people must grapple with these questions; often the rite de passage is accompanied with a ritual ceremony. Most of our students today are not engaged in those rituals, but we can gently nudge them into thinking about the implications of universal questions. We need to help them through transition rites; premodern man had formal structures for this transition, which was obligatory for all youth of the tribe:

> To gain the right to be admitted among adults, the adolescent has to pass through a series of initiatory ordeals; it is by virtue of these rites, and the revelations that they entail, that he will be recognized as a responsible member of societry. Initiation introduces the candidate into the human community and into the world of spiritual and cultural values.[14]

To lead our students into the realm of defining values may be the most significant skill we transmit as we "lead them out"--or educate--them. Writing about the archetype of initiation is one way to begin this education. We will also be giving our students life skills to analyze and assimilate experiences. We will be initiating our students, not only into knowledge, but on to the path of wisdom. I agree with Nancy Fisher[15] that this function is a significant role of education.

ENDNOTES

[1] Joseph Conrad, "The Open Boat," in College English, ed. Morris, et al., 8th ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1983), p. 221.

[2] Janet Emig, "Writing as a Mode of Learning," in The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook, ed. Gary Tate and Edward Corbett (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 75.

[3] Polanyi in The Web of Meaning: Essays on Writing, Teaching, Learning, and Thinking, by Janet Emig, ed. Goswami and Butler (Upper Montclair, New Jersey: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc., 1983), p. 151.

[4] Patricia Prandini Buckler, "Reading Writing, and Psycholinguistics: An Integrated Approach Using Joyce's 'Counterparts,'" in Teaching English in the Two-Year College, Vol. 12, No. 1 (February 1985), p. 23.

[5] Estella Lauter, Women as Mythmakers, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 4.

[6] Lauter, p. 4.

[7] Carl Jung in Lionel Trilling's criticism, unpublished handout of Erwin U. Wright, Stephens College, Columbia, Mo., n.d., p. 2.

[8] Carl Jung handout, p. 1.

[9] Henry David Thoreau, Walden, in Concise Anthology of American Literature, ed. George McMichael (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), p. 728.

[10] Annis Pratt, "Archetypal Approaches to the New Feminist Criticism," Bucknell Review, Vol. 21 (1973), p. 3.

[11] Carl Jung handout, p. 2.

[12] Bettina L. Knapp, A Jungian Approach to Literature (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p. 8.

[13] Robert A. Johnson, He: Understanding Masculine Psychology (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 2.

[14] Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1958), p. x.

[15] Nancy M. Fisher, "ESP, M*A*S*H, and the Wisdom of Literature," in Teaching English in the Two-Year College, Vol. 12, No. 2 (May 1985), p. 104.

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